

2a

EXAMINATION CONTENT

Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS)

Step 2 CS assesses whether an examinee can demonstrate the fundamental clinical skills essential for safe and effective patient care under supervision. These clinical skills include taking a relevant medical history, performing an appropriate physical examination, communicating effectively with the patient, clearly and accurately documenting the findings and diagnostic hypotheses from the clinical encounter, and ordering appropriate initial diagnostic studies.

Step 2 CS uses standardized patients, i.e., people trained to portray real patients. Examinees are expected to establish rapport with the standardized patients, elicit pertinent historical information from them, perform focused physical examinations, answer questions, and provide counseling where appropriate. After each interaction with a standardized patient, examinees record pertinent history and physical examination findings, list diagnostic impressions, and outline plans for further evaluation, if necessary. The cases cover common and important situations that a physician is likely to encounter in a general ambulatory setting.

Further details on the design and content of Step 2 CS will be provided at the USMLE website.

Step 3

Step 3 is organized along two principal dimensions: clinical encounter frame and physician task, as shown at the right. Step 3 content reflects a data-based model of generalist medical practice in the United States.

Encounter frames capture the essential features of circumstances surrounding physicians' clinical activity with patients. They range from encounters with patients seen for the first time for nonemergency problems, to encounters with regular patients seen in the context of continued care, to patient encounters in (life-threatening) emergency situations. Encounters occur in clinics, offices, skilled nursing care facilities, hospitals, emergency departments, and on the telephone. Each test item in an encounter frame also represents one of the six physician tasks. For example, initial care encounters emphasize taking a history

<http://www.usmle.org>
Sample Step 3 test materials and further information on Step 3 test content are available from your registration entity and at the USMLE website.

Table 3: USMLE Step 3 Specifications*

Clinical Encounter Frame

20%–30%	Initial care
50%–60%	Continued care
15%–25%	Emergency care

Physician Task

8%–12%	Obtaining history and performing physical examination
8%–12%	Using laboratory and diagnostic studies
8%–12%	Formulating most likely diagnosis
8%–12%	Evaluating severity of patient's problems
8%–12%	Applying scientific concepts and mechanisms of disease
45%–55%	Managing the patient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health maintenance • clinical intervention • clinical therapeutics • legal and ethical issues

* Percentages may be changed without notice.

and performing a physical examination. In contrast, continued care encounters emphasize decisions regarding prognosis and management.

High-frequency, high-impact diseases also organize the content of Step 3. Clinician experts assign clinical problems related to these diseases to individual clinical encounter frames to represent their occurrence in generalist practice.

PREPARING FOR THE TEST

Sample Test Materials

The best preparation for the USMLE is a general, thorough review of the content reflected in the examination specifications in Tables 1–3. You should also review further information on the examination content and test formats available on the USMLE website or from your registration entity and run the sample test materials available on the USMLE website or on the 2004 USMLE compact disc (CD). The 2004 USMLE CD is available through your registration entity.

There are no test preparation courses affiliated with or sanctioned by the USMLE program. Information on such courses is **not** available from the ECFMG, FSMB, NBME, USMLE Secretariat, or medical licensing authorities.

Test Lengths and Formats

- ☐ Step 1 has approximately 350 multiple-choice test items, divided into seven 60-minute blocks, administered in one eight-hour testing session.
- ☐ Step 2 CK has approximately 370 multiple-choice test items, divided into eight 60-minute blocks, administered in one nine-hour testing session.
- ☐ Step 2 CS has 10 to 12 patient cases. You will have 15 minutes for your patient encounter and 10 minutes to record the post-encounter note.
- ☐ Step 3 has approximately 480 multiple-choice test items, divided into blocks of 35 to 50 items. You will have 45 to 60 minutes to complete each of these blocks. There are approximately nine computer-based case simulations (see page 10), with one case in each block. You will have a maximum of 25 minutes to complete each of these blocks. Step 3 is administered in two eight-hour testing sessions.

For Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 3 multiple-choice sections, during the defined time to complete the items in each block, you may answer the items in any order, review your responses, and change answers. After you exit the block, or when time expires, you can no longer review test items or change answers.

Step 2 CS cases and Step 3 case simulations must be taken in the order presented. After you exit the case or session, or when time expires, you can no longer review test items or cases, change answers, or collect additional information.

<http://www.usmle.org>

Note: The test descriptions, including test length and number of test items or cases, provided here may be changed at any time. Notice of any changes will be posted on the USMLE website.

Multiple-Choice Test Items

You should acquaint yourself with the test software well before your test date(s). Practice time is not available on the test day. A brief tutorial on the test day provides a review of the test software, including navigation tools and examination format, prior to beginning the test. It does not provide an opportunity to practice.

Sample test materials to practice with the software are available to eligible applicants from their registration entity and at the USMLE website.

NBME research has shown that, on average, experience with computers has no effect on performance on computer-based, multiple-choice examinations.

PREPARING FOR THE TEST

Primum® Computer-Based Case Simulations (CCS)

Primum CCS allows you to provide care for a simulated patient. You decide which diagnostic information to obtain and how to treat and monitor the patient's progress. The computer records each step you take in caring for the patient and scores your overall performance. This format permits assessment of clinical decision-making skills in a more realistic and integrated manner than other available formats.

In *Primum* CCS, you may request information from the history and physical examination; order laboratory studies, procedures, and consultants; and start medications and other therapies. Any of the thousands of possible entries that you type on the "order sheet" are processed and verified by the "clerk." When you have confirmed that there is nothing further you wish to do, you decide when to reevaluate the patient by advancing time. As time passes, the patient's condition changes based on the underlying problem and your interventions; results of tests are reported, and results of interventions must be monitored. You suspend the movement of time as you consider next steps. While you cannot go back in time, you can change your orders to reflect your updated management plan.

The patient's chart contains, in addition to the order sheet, the reports resulting from your orders. By selecting the appropriate chart tabs, you can review vital signs, progress notes, nurses' notes, and test results. You may care for and move the patient among the office, home, emergency department, intensive care unit, and hospital ward.

Practice time with the *Primum* software is not available on the test day. Therefore, you must review the *Primum* CCS orientation materials and practice with all the sample cases well in advance of your testing day to have a thorough understanding of how the CCS system works. CCS sample cases are provided to Step 3 applicants on the 2004 USMLE CD and are available at the USMLE website.

Practice at Prometric® Test Centers

If you wish to experience some of the conditions of test administration for Step 1, Step 2 CK, or Step 3, you may schedule time to review sample test materials at a Prometric Test Center for a fee. Although shorter than an actual USMLE Step and containing the same sample test materials provided by the USMLE registration entities and at the USMLE website, this option allows you to experience USMLE sample test materials in the same environment as your actual test. After your registration for a Step is complete and you have received your Scheduling Permit, you may register for a practice session for that Step by following the instructions at the USMLE website or by contacting your registration entity.

Note: If you register for the practice session, you will receive a separate Scheduling Permit specifically for the practice session. You must have this Permit before you can contact Prometric to schedule the practice session.

APPLYING FOR THE TEST AND SCHEDULING YOUR TEST DATE

Application Materials

If you meet the eligibility requirements on page 3, you can apply for the Step 1, Step 2 CK, or Step 3 at any time. Applications are available from the appropriate registration entity. You must use current application materials to apply.

Details on application procedures, once determined, for Step 2 CS will be described on the USMLE website and the website of your registration entity.

Note: See page 26 for information on how to contact your registration entity to apply for a Step.

Applying for Step 1 and Step 2 CK

Students and graduates of LCME- and AOA-accredited medical schools should apply for Step 1 and Step 2 CK by following the instructions at the NBME website (<http://www.nbme.org>). Review and follow the application instructions, complete your application, and submit it to the NBME.

Students and graduates of medical schools outside the United States and Canada should apply for Step 1 and Step 2 CK by following the instructions at the ECFMG website (<http://www.ecfm.org>) or obtaining application materials from the ECFMG. Review and follow the application instructions, complete your application, and submit it to the ECFMG.

Applying for Step 3

To request information on Step 3 eligibility requirements and application procedures, follow the instructions at the FSMB website (<http://www.fsmb.org>), or contact the FSMB or the medical licensing authority to which you wish to apply.

Note: See pages 27–32 for information on how to contact medical licensing authorities.

Application procedures for Step 3 vary among jurisdictions. You should begin inquiries at least three months in advance of the dates on which you expect to take the test.

After you obtain application materials, review and follow the application instructions to complete your application and submit it to the medical licensing authority or the FSMB as directed in the instructions.

Examinees with Disabilities

The USMLE program provides reasonable accommodations for examinees with disabilities who are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you are a disabled individual covered under the ADA and require test accommodations, the following guidelines apply to you:

- ☐ You must obtain information regarding procedures and documentation requirements in advance of applying for each Step. This information is available from the USMLE website, from your registration entity if you are applying for Step 1 or Step 2 CK, or from the FSMB if you are applying for Step 3. Details on applying for test accommodations for Step 2 CS, once determined, will be described on the USMLE website.
- ☐ Your application for the Step, your request for test accommodations, and accompanying documentation must be submitted at the same time to the appropriate mailing address.
- ☐ When USMLE Steps are taken with test accommodations, score reports and transcripts may include an annotation that an accommodation was provided.

APPLYING FOR THE TEST AND SCHEDULING YOUR TEST DATE

Obtaining an Eligibility Period for Step 1 and Step 2 CK

When applying for Step 1 or Step 2 CK, you must select a three-month period, such as January-February-March or February-March-April, during which you prefer to take the Step. A Scheduling Permit with instructions for making an appointment at a Prometric Test Center will be sent to you after your registration entity processes your application and determines your eligibility. The Scheduling Permit specifies the three-month eligibility period during which you must complete the examination. If the processing of your application is not completed in time to allow your preferred three-month period to be assigned, you will be assigned to the next three-month period. Allow approximately four weeks for processing of your application. On receipt of your Scheduling Permit, you are able to contact Prometric immediately to schedule a test date.

Prometric schedules testing appointments for Steps 1 and 2 CK up to six months in advance of the assigned eligibility period. If your application is submitted more than six months in advance of your requested eligibility period, it will be processed, but your Scheduling Permit will be sent no more than six months before your assigned eligibility period begins.

Details about eligibility periods, locations of test sites, and scheduling for Step 2 CS, when determined, will be provided at the USMLE website and the website of your registration entity.

If you are unable to take the test within your eligibility period, contact your registration entity to inquire about a contiguous three-month eligibility period extension. A fee is charged for this service. Visit your registration entity's website (see page 26) for more information. If you do not take the test within your eligibility period and wish to take it in the future, you must reapply by submitting a new application and fee(s).

Testing Regions

Step 1 and Step 2 CK are administered in the United States and Canada and in more than 50 other countries. International testing locations are distributed among defined international testing regions. These regions are noted in ECFMG application materials along with instructions for choosing a region and paying the additional international test delivery surcharge. Within each region, Prometric has a central scheduling office known as the "Regional Registration Center" to contact for scheduling test dates.

**<http://www.prometric.com>
Use the Prometric Test Center Locator for
up-to-date information on the locations
of Prometric Test Centers.**

Step 2 CS will be delivered at regional test sites within the United States.

Obtaining an Eligibility Period for Step 3

Step 3 eligibility periods are assigned once your application has been processed and approved. In deciding when to apply for Step 3, allow approximately two to four weeks for processing. Time for processing will vary depending on the particular medical licensing authority and the volume of applications. Upon complete processing of your Step 3 application and confirmation of eligibility, a Scheduling Permit is sent to you with instructions for making an appointment at a Prometric Test Center. On receipt of your Scheduling Permit, you should contact Prometric immediately to schedule the test dates. The Scheduling Permit specifies the eligibility period (beginning immediately and extending for approximately 90 calendar days) during which you must complete the examination. If you are unable to take the test within your eligibility period, contact the FSMB to inquire about a contiguous three-month eligibility period extension. A fee is charged for this service, and some restrictions may apply. Visit the FSMB website (<http://www.fsmb.org>) for more detailed information. If you do not take the test within your original or extended eligibility period and wish to take it in the future, you must reapply by submitting a new application and fee(s).

APPLYING FOR THE TEST AND SCHEDULING YOUR TEST DATE

Application and scheduling information for Step 2 CS, when determined, will be available on the USMLE website and the website of your registration entity. The following application and scheduling information pertains to Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 3.

Your Scheduling Permit

Note: You will not be able to take the test if you do not bring your official Scheduling Permit to the test center (see page 16). Please keep it in a secure location. If you lose your permit, contact your registration entity immediately. A fee may be charged to issue a replacement, and you may be required to reschedule your appointment.

You should verify the information on your Scheduling Permit before scheduling your appointment. Your Scheduling Permit includes the following:

- ☐ your name (see page 17) and mailing address,
- ☐ the examination for which you registered,
- ☐ your eligibility period,
- ☐ your testing region,
- ☐ your Scheduling Number,
- ☐ your Candidate Identification Number (CIN).

Note: Your Scheduling Number is needed when you contact Prometric to schedule test dates. It differs from your Candidate Identification Number (CIN), which is your private key needed to start the test and to initiate each test block. Prometric does not have access to your CIN.

Scheduling Test Dates

When applying for the USMLE (Steps 1, 2 CK, and 3) or scheduling test dates, please keep the following in mind:

- ☐ You must have your Scheduling Permit before you contact Prometric to schedule a testing appointment. Appointments are assigned on a "first-come, first-served" basis; therefore, you should contact Prometric to schedule as soon as possible after you have received your Scheduling Permit.
- ☐ You may take the test on any day that it is offered during your assigned eligibility period, provided that there is space at the Prometric Test Center you choose.
- ☐ Prometric Test Centers are closed on major local holidays.
- ☐ USMLE Steps 1, 2 CK, and 3 are not available during the first two weeks of January.
- ☐ The busiest testing times in the Prometric testing network in the United States and Canada are May through July and November through December.
- ☐ Some, but not all, Prometric Test Centers are open on weekend days. When you schedule your Step 3 test dates, the two days on which you take the test will be consecutive days unless the center is closed on the day that follows your first day of testing. In that event, Prometric will assign you to the next day the center is open for your second day of testing. In all other cases, you must take Step 3 on two consecutive days at the same test center.

APPLYING FOR THE TEST AND SCHEDULING YOUR TEST DATE

Your Scheduling Permit includes specific information for contacting Prometric to schedule your test date(s) at the test center of your choice.

**<http://www.prometric.com>
Use the Prometric Test Center Locator for
up-to-date information on the locations
of Prometric Test Centers.**

You will be required to provide information found only on your Scheduling Permit. When you schedule your appointment, you will receive the following specific information:

- ☐ the confirmed test day(s), date(s), and time;
- ☐ the address and telephone number of the Prometric Test Center where you will test; and
- ☐ your Prometric Confirmation Number.

Scheduling a testing appointment for a specific date at a Prometric Test Center is not a guarantee that the scheduled test time or location will remain available. The Prometric Test Center at which you are scheduled may become unavailable after you have scheduled your appointment. In that event, Prometric will attempt to notify you in advance of your scheduled testing appointment and to schedule you for a different time and/or center. However, on rare occasions, rescheduling your appointment for a different time or center may occur at the last minute. To avoid losses you would incur as a result, you should try to maintain flexibility in your travel arrangements.

Rescheduling Test Dates

If you are unable to keep your testing appointment on the scheduled date(s) or at the scheduled location, you may change your date(s) or center by contacting Prometric. You will need to provide your Prometric Confirmation Number when you reschedule.

To avoid a rescheduling fee, you must make the request to reschedule your appointment at least five business days before your appointment. If you are testing in the United States or Canada, you must make your request by noon eastern time at least five business days before your appointment. If you are testing outside the United States or Canada, you must make your request by noon local time of the call center you are contacting to schedule your appointment at least five business days before your appointment.

When contacting Prometric, you must speak with a representative. Leaving a voice mail message does not satisfy the requirement to provide advance notice. If you provide less than five business days' notice, Prometric will charge you a fee to reschedule your test date(s). Your rescheduled test date(s) must fall within your assigned eligibility period.

APPLYING FOR THE TEST AND SCHEDULING YOUR TEST DATE

Summary of Process

In summary, to take Steps 1, 2 CK, and 3, you must meet the eligibility requirements shown on page 3 and do the following:

- ☐ Contact the appropriate registration entity for application materials (see page 26).
- ☐ Complete your application materials and submit them to your registration entity.
- ☐ Receive a Scheduling Permit verifying your eligibility and authorizing you to schedule the examination.
- ☐ Follow the instructions on your Scheduling Permit to schedule your test date(s) at a specific Prometric Test Center.
- ☐ On the scheduled test date(s) and at the scheduled time, bring to the Prometric Test Center your Scheduling Permit and the required identification described on it (see page 16).
- ☐ Take the test.

TESTING

Specific details on testing for Step 2 CS, once determined, will be available at the USMLE website and the website of your registration entity. The following testing information pertains to Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 3.

Test Centers and Testing Conditions

Prometric provides computer-based testing services for academic assessment, professional licensure, and certification. USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 CK are given at Prometric Test Centers around the world. Step 3 is given at Prometric Test Centers in the United States and its territories.

These centers provide the resources necessary for secure administration of the USMLE, including video and audio monitoring and recording, and use of digital cameras to record the identity of examinees.

<http://www.prometric.com>
Use the Prometric Test Center Locator for up-to-date information on the locations of Prometric Test Centers.

The USMLE program has established rules to govern administration of the examinations to ensure that no examinee or group of examinees receives unfair advantage on the examination, inadvertently or otherwise. The rules include standard test administration conditions consistent with the principles on which the examinations are developed and scored. However, if there is a reason to believe that the integrity of the examination process is jeopardized, the USMLE parent organizations may invalidate all or any part of an examination.

If information indicates that continued testing would jeopardize the security of examination materials or the integrity of scores, the USMLE parent organizations reserve the right to suspend or cancel test administration.

Individual examinations are drawn from large pools of content-parallel test forms, which are in turn created from very large banks of test materials. Individual examinations vary within and across test centers, and within and across test days. Electronic encryption is employed to protect the security of item banks, test forms, and test responses. Physical security at test centers is maintained by proctoring and video surveillance and recording.

Admission to the Test

You should arrive at the Prometric Test Center 30 minutes before your scheduled testing time on your testing day(s). If you arrive late, you may not be admitted. If you arrive more than 30 minutes after your scheduled testing time, you will not be admitted. In that event, you must pay a fee to Prometric to reschedule your test. Your rescheduled test date(s) must fall within your assigned eligibility period.

When you arrive at the test center, you must present your Scheduling Permit and the required identification described on your Scheduling Permit. Acceptable forms of identification include the following forms of unexpired identification:

- ☐ passport,
- ☐ driver's license with photograph,
- ☐ national identity card,
- ☐ other form of unexpired, government-issued identification,
- ☐ ECFMG-issued identification card.

Your identification must contain both your signature and photograph. If it contains your photograph but not your signature, you can use another form of unexpired identification that contains your signature, such as a student/employee identification card or a credit card, to supplement your photo-bearing, government-issued identification.